

Padre Island

National Seashore

General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement Newsletter



P.O. Box 181300, Corpus Christi, TX

August 2003

The Park

Padre Island National Seashore was established by an act of Congress on September 28, 1962. (Public Law 87-712), "to save and preserve, for the purposes of public recreation, benefit, and inspiration a portion of diminishing seashore of the United States that remains undeveloped." Padre Island National Seashore encompasses 130,355 acres of America's vanishing barrier islands. It is the longest portion of undeveloped barrier island in the world. White sand beaches, interior grasslands, freshwater ponds and wetlands, and the Laguna Madre provide habitat for sea turtles, migrating songbirds and shorebirds, deer, snakes, waterfowl, and coyotes. While providing food, water and shelter for the multitude of diverse wildlife, the island remains a destination for tourists. Visitors experience the wind in their face and the surf on their feet. From windsurfing to fishing, the seashore provides many recreational opportunities.

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Help Us Plan for Padre Island's Future

The National Park Service has begun planning for long-range management of Padre Island National Seashore. The existing Padre Island General Management Plan (GMP) was completed in 1983. Many changes in visitor use and resource conditions have occurred since then, and it is now time for a re-evaluation. A new GMP will provide guidance and the framework for future decisions affecting the park's resources and the visitor experience for the next 10 to 15 years.

The purpose of this newsletter is:

- to share information about the GMP process with you; and
- to obtain your thoughts and views on what Padre Island National Seashore should be like in the future.

Our national park system represents our national heritage and includes many of the nations most outstanding and significant natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources. Each unit contains resources and values that make it something special—even nationally and globally significant. Padre Island National Seashore is a dynamic barrier island ecosystem with an outstanding set of resources. The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources of this vital ecosystem for present and future generations, while managing opportunities for shoreline recreation, natural history study, and contemplation along the 60-mile coastline.

Public participation is an essential aspect of our planning process. Your input will help us evaluate the park's current conditions and anticipate future needs, while considering preservation of park resources and visitor use.



Please take some time to help us plan for the future by answering our questions online at: <http://planning.nps.gov/parkweb/comments.cfm?RecordID=143>. Give us your thoughts on how we can provide the highest quality service to the visiting public, while preserving the park's heritage and resources for our children.

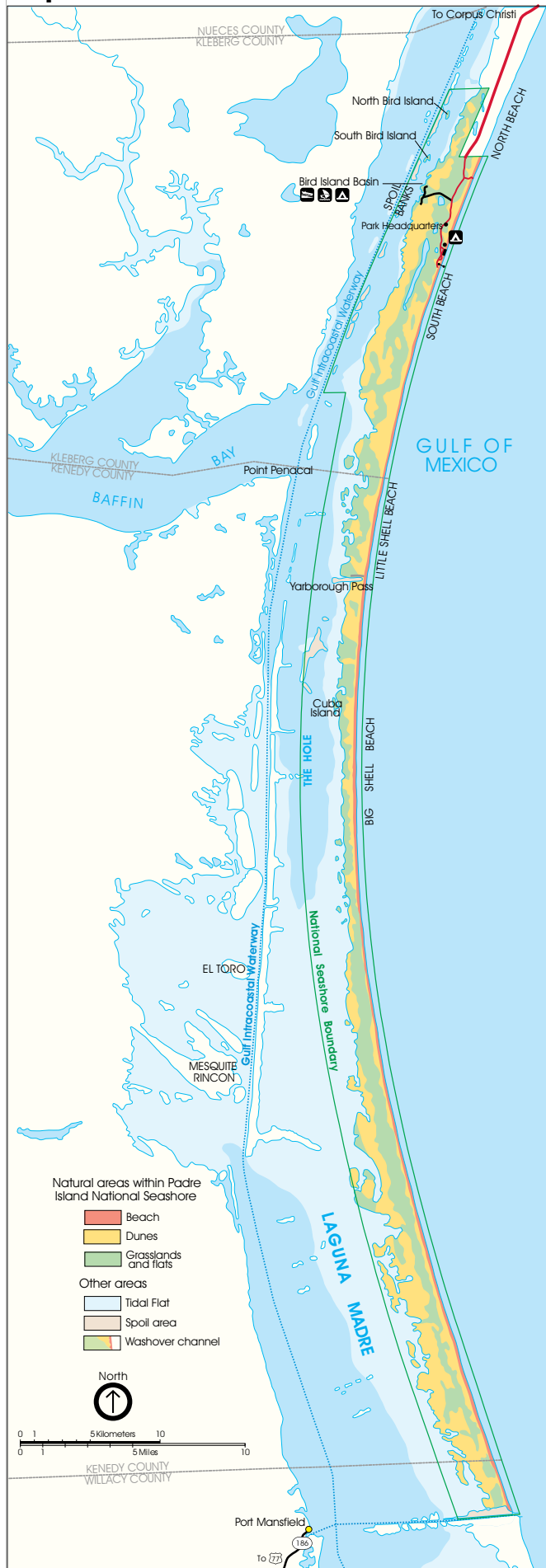
Thank you for your participation in planning for Padre Island National Seashore's future.

Sincerely,

Jock Whitworth

Superintendent, Padre Island National Seashore

Map of Padre Island National Seashore



What is a General Management Plan?

A General Management Plan is a tool that establishes the basic management philosophy of the park and provides the rationale for making management decisions that affect the park's resources and visitor experience. Its purpose is:

- To clearly describe specific resource conditions and visitor experiences in various management units throughout the park; and
- To identify the kinds of management, use, and development that will be appropriate to achieving and maintaining those conditions.

The GMP and its accompanying Environmental Impact Statement present and analyze distinctly different alternatives that address the park's present and future needs such as future development, stewardship of its natural resources and its educational and interpretive programs. The GMP establishes management priorities and provides the linkage between the national seashore and the national park system...the piece of America's Heritage that the park represents.

Some of the fundamental questions a GMP needs to answer are:

- How can we best manage the park to protect and preserve the park for present and future generations while providing for visitor use?
- What facilities are needed to provide for park operations, visitor use, interpretation, natural and cultural resource management, and partnerships?

The Purpose of Padre Island National Seashore

Each park unit in the national park system is established for a specific purpose. The reason or reasons why Padre Island National Seashore was set aside is called its *park purpose*. The *park purpose* reflects current scientific or scholarly inquiry and interpretation. Purpose statements are based on legislation, legislative history, and historic trends. Other legislation that affects each park unit includes the 1916 Organic Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Historic Preservation Act, and the Endangered Species Act.

Padre Island National Seashore's purpose is:

"to preserve, protect, and interpret a portion of one of the last undeveloped seashores for public recreation, benefit, education, and inspiration."

Special Mandates

Management at Padre Island National Seashore must include consideration of two mandates included in the enabling legislation.

- Oil and gas mineral rights will be managed in accordance with the 2000 Oil and Gas Management Plan and accompanying Environmental Impact Statement.
- Administrative agreements will be established to assure the continued use of Navy gunnery and bombing ranges located in the vicinity of Padre Island National Seashore.

Significance Statements Capture the Park's Importance

To capture the importance of Padre Island National Seashore to our nation's natural and cultural heritage, the park has developed significance statements. These statements describe the distinct resources that distinguish Padre Island as one of the units in the national park system and reflect the exceptional values and resources that must be preserved and maintained to achieve the purpose of the park. These statements help park managers establish management priorities and identify primary park interpretive themes and desirable visitor experiences.

- Padre Island National Seashore is the longest section of undeveloped barrier island in the world, protecting rare coastal prairie; a complex, dynamic dune system; and the Laguna Madre, one of the few hypersaline lagoon environments left in the world.
- The location of the island, ocean dynamics, biotic diversity and integrity, and lack of development make Padre Island National Seashore an ideal place to study natural communities and species associated with barrier islands.
- Padre Island National Seashore, including the Laguna Madre, provides important habitat for marine and terrestrial plants and animals, including a number of rare, threatened, and endangered species.
- Bird Island Basin in the Laguna Madre is internationally recognized as one of the best windsurfing areas in the world.



- There are seven species of sea turtles in the world, all of which are threatened or endangered. Padre Island National Seashore is the only area on the Texas coast where nests from all five species of sea turtles that occur in the Gulf of Mexico have been documented. More Kemp's ridley sea turtle nests have been found at the national seashore than at any other single location in the United States. The Gulf of Mexico, Laguna Madre, and the Mansfield Channel provide important habitat for these five species of sea turtles.
- With the longest stretch of undeveloped barrier island beach in the world, Padre Island National Seashore provides rare opportunities for beach recreation in an environment of isolation and solitude.
- Padre Island National Seashore offers outstanding recreational fishing opportunities in the Laguna Madre and Gulf of Mexico.

- Situated along the Central Flyway, Padre Island is a globally important area for over 350 migratory, overwintering, and resident bird species.
- The integrity of Padre Island National Seashore as a cultural landscape documents a continuum of human habitation from more than 2,500 years ago to today in a continually changing barrier island landscape that itself is only about 5,000 years old.
- Archival resources regarding Spanish exploration of North America document the history of the area that is now Padre Island National Seashore. Padre Island National Seashore includes important archeological resources relating to the era of early Spanish exploration — including three shipwrecks dating to 1554. The Novillo line camp and associated historic resources of Padre Island National Seashore include some of the last remaining structures relating to barrier island open-range cattle ranching in the United States.



United States Department of the Interior – National Park Service

Padre Island National Seashore

P.O. Box 181300

Corpus Christi TX 78480-1300

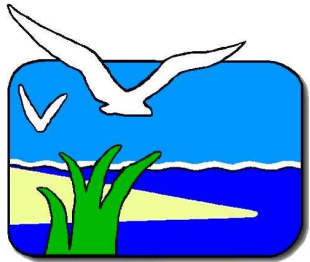
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Visit our website at

<http://planning.nps.gov/parkweb/default.cfm?RecordID=143>

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How to Participate in Scoping

Public input during the GMP process will help us establish:

- Relative resource protection priorities and goals,
- Public use goals for different areas (or management zones) of the national seashore,
- Help set resource management objectives, and
- Determine public services needed for the next 10 to 15 years.

Please provide some feedback for us to consider in planning for Padre Island National Seashore's future by answering the following questions.

- What aspects of current conditions could be changed to make your experience at the seashore better?
- Why should this existing condition of practice be changed?
- How can we best manage the park to protect and preserve the park for present and future generations while providing for visitor use?
- What facilities are needed to provide for park operations, visitor use, interpretation, natural and cultural resource management, and partnerships?
- Give us some of your ideas of the national seashore's special experiences that need to be preserved for future generations?

You can submit comments by two methods. **Comments must be received by September 30, 2003.**

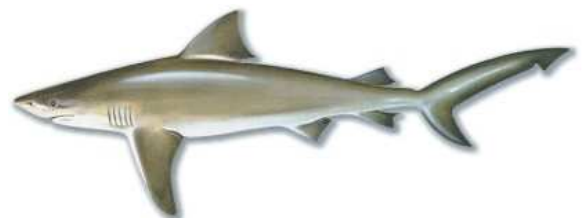
- You can answer questions online at <http://planning.nps.gov/parkweb/comments.cfm?RecordID=143>.
- You can fold and return this form with your comments.

Thank you for your input and helping us plan for the future of Padre Island National Seashore.

Your name and address:

☐ Please add me to the project mailing list.

Thank you for contributing to the planning effort at Padre Island National Seashore!



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Superintendent
Padre Island National Seashore
P.O. Box 181300
Corpus Christi, TX 78480-1300

Please fold here and close with tape (no staples)